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Hans Keller was perhaps the most influential music critic on British soil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Never known for his diplomacy, he communicated widely and passionately in provocative and to-the-point prose. It is fitting that in this, the “first full biography,” authors Alison Garnham and Susi Woodhouse capture Keller through his own arresting style, quoting extensively from primary source material. As a rough and unsubstantiated guess (the kind Keller would doubtlessly have objected to), I’d suggest that a fifth or more of the book consists of quotations. For the most part, the authors draw on excerpts from letters, but other texts, such as drafts intended for publication or radio broadcasts, also feature. This richness of primary source materials is undoubtedly what will draw researchers to the book: they will be tempted to use it almost as a one-stop-shop to Keller’s vast archive. Garnham and Woodhouse know Keller’s papers and archive inside out, boast an impressive number of publications on Keller’s life and work, and their sheer knowledge shows.

Given such meticulous attention to archival detail, the structure of the narrative at times meanders, rather than being organised alongside strict topical and thematic areas. For example, the first chapter explores Jewish culture in interwar, post-Habsburg Vienna, Keller’s contributions to the Paris-based German exile newspaper, *Das Neue Tagebuch*, his studies in psychology, his internment as an enemy alien, his admiration of Britten and Mozart, his interests in film music, and more. Closer biographical focus looms large, too. The book opens with Keller landing at Croydon Airport, and sees him make numerous acquaintances, including his first meetings with his future wife as well as Benjamin Britten. As such, the chapters are treasure troves, which reveal their secrets incrementally to the alert reader. For the most part, the authors resist the temptation to zoom out and seek for wider contextualisations, instead adopting a historicist approach that prioritises primary, archival sources. It is perhaps telling that the book does not have an introduction as such, instead employing a very short preface that explicitly encourages readers to find their own route through Keller’s work.

In some ways, this strategy mirrors the almost circuitous route that led Keller to write about music. The authors’ supposition that Keller may never have become a music critic were it not for his forced migration to Britain is, as they readily admit, pure speculation. But it is a plausible one. The second chapter describes Keller’s initial years as a music critic, with publications in *Music & Letters*, *The Music Review*, and elsewhere. More often than not, Keller seems to have been at loggerheads with one or other of his fellow critics. If his outspoken prose provoked criticism, and sometimes hostility, however, his detailed and well-researched texts resulted in an ever-growing reputation as a sharp critic in British musical circles. Growing friendships are chartered, too, such as that with Donald Mitchell, who may have contributed to Keller’s growing interest in and subsequent advocacy of Schoenberg—a figure whose Continental renown was not matched in Britain.

Throughout the book, it is clear how irate Keller was when he encountered what, to him, seemed like sloppiness. Keller’s image is of a man who was obsessed with acquiring as detailed an understanding of any piece of music he engaged with as possible. Perhaps this is why Keller sometimes warmed only slowly to certain composers, Schoenberg being a case in point. Beyond that, it may be that Keller’s dissatisfaction with the state of British musical criticism drew him towards working on a more solid and methodically sound analysis. The resulting wordless functional analysis, for which Keller is well known, stands at the centre of the book’s fifth chapter, and pays special attention to a repertoire dear to Keller, namely Mozart’s and Haydn’s string quartets. While the British musical establishment took little notice in Keller’s invention at first—NDR, the North German Radio Station, conversely, showed enthusiastic interest—it did eventually become a success, especially through programmes broadcast on the BBC.

Indeed, the BBC became the platform through which Keller undoubtedly reached his largest audiences, first on radio, and later also on TV. Keller’s appointment came on the heels of William Glock’s as Controller of Music in 1959 and may be seen as a sea change. Both, Glock and Keller,

seized on the appetite for radical innovation that brought them into power. Garnham and Woodhouse dedicate a whole chapter, the sixth of the book, to Keller at the BBC. As elsewhere, Keller did not shy away from controversy and never hesitated to see feathers ruffled—within the BBC and beyond. For example, when the appointment of Austrian-born naturalised Brit Rudolf Schwarz as conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1959 met a xenophobic response, Keller wrote in the *News Chronicle* that he ‘felt for a moment I was back under Hitler rule.’ Now in a position of power with musical circles, however, Keller’s voice began to carry more weight, and Garnham and Woodhouse are correct, I think, when they point out the significance of the BBC position for Keller, who, having arrived as a refugee, relished his move to one of the institutional epicentres of British cultural life. To me, this chapter is the most successful of the book, as Garnham and Woodhouse provide detailed accounts of Keller continuously and proactively questioning the workings of the institution, which, overall, regarded him highly.

In the 1970s, Keller’s last decade at the BBC, his relationship with the corporation soured, as the authors explore in chapter 7. This was also the time when Keller addressed his past as a political refugee publicly, notably in a 1973 broadcast in which he recalled his imprisonment by the Nazis in 1938 Vienna and which, as the book explores, drew many empathetic and positive responses from friends, colleagues, and listeners. The eighth and final chapter, ‘Beyond Broadcasting’, draws together a number of strands from Keller’s life from the mid-1970s onwards: his book *1975*, a cautionary and dystopian collection of essays, visits to Israel in the late 70s, interactions with various British composers and performers, several teaching activities, his almost fanatical love of football, and, despite the chapter’s title, more on his increasingly tense connection with the BBC.

Given such an almost overpowering wealth of topics, it is surely pedantic to point out what is *not* in the book. Garnham and Woodhouse focus overwhelmingly on British musical life and include very little of Keller’s interaction with the international music scene. Almost entirely absent is Keller’s engagement with popular music. Keller’s famous interview with Pink Floyd, for example, which showcases his complete incomprehension of, and blatant unwillingness to engage with, popular music is not mentioned. Views as to whether this predominant focus on British musical life is a disadvantage will inevitably vary from reader to reader. Overall, then, the book is extraordinarily rich in detail and shines with an impressive inclusion of primary source materials. On the other hand, the authors did not aim to provide overall narratisations or conceptualisations, instead leaving it to the reader to combine the various strands.